

## TEARDROP FILM COOLED BLADE

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

5 [0001] The present invention relates generally to gas turbine engines, and, more specifically,  
6 to turbine rotor blades therein.

7 [0002] In a gas turbine engine air is pressurized in a compressor and mixed with fuel in a  
8 combustor for generating hot combustion gases. Energy is extracted from the gases in a high  
9 pressure turbine which powers the compressor. Additional energy is extracted from the gases  
10 in a low pressure turbine which powers a fan in a typical aircraft turbofan gas turbine engine  
11 application.

12 [0003] Engine efficiency increases as combustion gas temperature increases, but the gas  
13 temperature must be limited for protecting the various components over which the combustion  
14 gases flow during operation. For example, the combustion gases are initially confined by the  
15 liners of the combustor and channeled between the stator vanes of the turbine nozzle bounded  
16 by inner and outer bands. The combustion gases flow between the turbine rotor blades and are  
17 bound by radially inner platforms integral therewith and radially outer turbine shrouds  
18 surrounding the row of rotor blades.

19 [0004] Each component of the engine is specifically designed with a specific configuration  
20 for its specific purpose associated with the hot combustion gases. The hot engine components  
21 directly exposed to the hot combustion gases are typically cooled by using a portion of the  
22 pressurized air diverted from the compressor which is channeled through corresponding  
23 cooling circuits of the components.

24 [0005] The variety of cooling circuits and features thereof is remarkably large due to the  
25 associated problems in cooling the variously configured components. Turbine component life  
26 is typically limited by local affects, and therefore each component must be specifically  
27 designed in toto for protection from the hot combustion gases while maintaining suitable  
28 strength of the component for the desired useful life of the component.

29 [0006] Component life is a significant factor in designing modern aircraft turbofan engines  
30 which directly affects acquisition and maintenance costs of thereof. Accordingly,

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1 state-of-the-art high strength superalloy materials are commonly used in the design of modern  
2 aircraft engines, notwithstanding their correspondingly high cost. Superalloy materials, such  
3 as nickel or cobalt based superalloys, maintain high strength at high temperature and are  
4 desirable in the manufacture of the various hot components of the engine.

5 [0007] In a typical high pressure, first stage turbine rotor blade, the superalloy material  
6 thereof is typically enhanced by coating the exposed, external surface of the blade with a  
7 thermal barrier coating (TBC). Such coatings are typically ceramic materials which have  
8 enhanced thermal insulating performance for protecting the superalloy metallic substrates of  
9 the hot components, such as the turbine blade.

10 [0008] The blade includes suitable internal cooling circuits through which the compressor  
11 air coolant is channeled for maintaining the operating temperature of the blade below a desired  
12 limit for ensuring the intended life for the blade. The blade cooling circuits are myriad in  
13 view of the complexity of the airfoil thereof and the corresponding complex temperature  
14 distribution of the combustion gases which flow thereover during operation.

15 [0009] Internal cooling circuits typically include dedicated circuits for the leading edge  
16 region of the airfoil, the trailing edge region of the airfoil, the mid-chord region of the airfoil,  
17 as well as the radially outer tip portion of the airfoil which defines a relatively small clearance  
18 or gap with the surrounding turbine shroud. Internal cooling of the airfoil is complemented by  
19 external cooling of the airfoil provided by various holes or apertures which extend through the  
20 pressure or suction sidewalls, or both, of the airfoil.

21 [0010] The airfoil sidewalls typically include inclined film cooling apertures extending  
22 therethrough which discharge the spent cooling air in thin films along the external surface of  
23 the airfoil for providing an additional thermal insulating barrier between the airfoil and the hot  
24 combustion gases. The variety of film cooling holes themselves is also myriad in view of the  
25 complexity of the combustion flowstream surrounding the airfoil. A suitable pressure drop  
26 must be provided at each of the film cooling holes to provide a corresponding backflow  
27 margin for the holes, as well as discharging the film cooling air without excessive velocity  
28 which could lead to undesirable blowoff.

29 [0011] Since the various portions of the airfoil have different operating environments in the  
30 combustion gas flow field, they require different cooling configurations. The cooling

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1 configurations for the leading edge of the airfoil therefore is not appropriate for the cooling  
2 configuration for the trailing edge of the airfoil, and vice versa. Furthermore, the generally  
3 concave pressure side of the airfoil operates differently than the generally convex suction side  
4 of the airfoil, and correspondingly require different cooling configurations.

5 [0012] And, the radially outer tip of the airfoil typically includes small squealer ribs  
6 extending outwardly from the perimeter of the tip which define a small tip cavity above a solid  
7 floor of the tip. The combustion gases necessarily leak over the airfoil tip in the clearance  
8 provided with the turbine shroud and therefore subject the small squealer ribs to hot  
9 combustion gases on both sides thereof. Accordingly, tip cooling requires special  
10 configurations, which again are found with myriad differences in conventional applications.

11 [0013] One exemplary gas turbine engine has enjoyed many, many years of successful  
12 commercial operation in a marine application. Marine and industrial gas turbine engines are  
13 typically derived from their previous turbofan aircraft gas turbine engine parents, and are  
14 modified for use in the non-aircraft configurations. These various gas turbine engines  
15 nevertheless share common core engines including the compressor, combustor, and high  
16 pressure turbine, notwithstanding their different low pressure turbine configuration for  
17 providing output power for the fan in the turbofan application or drive shafts in marine and  
18 industrial applications.

19 [0014] Although the exemplary marine engine disclosed above has enjoyed many, many  
20 thousands of hours of successful commercial use, that long experience has uncovered a form  
21 of thermally induced distress in the high pressure, first stage turbine rotor blades nearing the  
22 end of their useful lives. In particular, both the blade tip, and the mid-span region of the blade  
23 on the suction sidewall just aft of the blade leading edge are showing thermal distress which  
24 leads to the degradation of the thermal barrier coating.

25 [0015] Accordingly, it is desired to provide a turbine rotor blade having improved cooling  
26 for specifically addressing the newly uncovered local distress in high-time rotor blades.

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#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

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30 [0016] A turbine blade includes an airfoil having an internal cooling circuit with a first flow

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1 passage disposed directly behind the leading edge followed by a second flow passage  
2 separated therefrom by a corresponding bridge. The bridge includes a row of impingement  
3 apertures for cooling the leading edge. The suction sidewall of the airfoil includes a row of  
4 diffusion film cooling first holes extending in flow communication with the first passage. The  
5 first holes have a compound inclination angle, with a quadrilateral cross section forming a  
6 generally teardrop shaped outlet in the convex contour of the suction sidewall.

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#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

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10 [0017] The invention, in accordance with preferred and exemplary embodiments, together  
11 with further objects and advantages thereof, is more particularly described in the following  
12 detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

13 [0018] Figure 1 is an isometric view of an exemplary first stage turbine rotor blade.

14 [0019] Figure 2 is an axial sectional view of the airfoil illustrated in Figure 1 showing an  
15 internal cooling circuit therein.

16 [0020] Figure 3 is a radial sectional view through the airfoil illustrated in Figure 2, and taken  
17 along line 3-3.

18 [0021] Figure 4 is a flowchart representation of an exemplary method of forming the  
19 specifically configured diffusion film cooling holes in the blade illustrated in Figures 1-3.

20 [0022] Figure 5 is an enlarged isometric view of the tip of the blade illustrated in Figure 1.

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#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

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25 [0023] Illustrated in Figure 1 is an exemplary turbine rotor blade 10 for a gas turbine engine  
26 which may have any conventional configuration such as a turbofan aircraft engine, a marine  
27 turbine engine, or an industrial turbine engine. The blade includes a hollow airfoil 12  
28 integrally joined to a supporting dovetail 14 at a platform 16 therebetween. The dovetail may  
29 have any conventional configuration and is used for mounting the blade in a corresponding  
30 slot in the perimeter of a turbine rotor disk which drives a multistage axial compressor (not

1 shown).

2 [0024] The airfoil includes a generally concave, pressure or first sidewall 18 and an  
3 opposite, generally convex suction or second sidewall 20. The two sidewalls extend chordally  
4 between axially opposite leading and trailing edges 22,24 which extend in longitudinal or  
5 radial span from a radially inner root 26 at the platform 16 to a radially outer tip 28 typically  
6 disposed closely below a surrounding turbine shroud (not shown).

7 [0025] As illustrated in Figures 2 and 3, the blade also includes an internal cooling circuit 30  
8 which extends through the dovetail and airfoil for channeling therethrough a portion of  
9 pressurized compressor air or coolant 32 diverted from the compressor during operation. The  
10 cooling circuit may have any conventional configuration, and in the preferred embodiment  
11 illustrated in Figures 2 and 3 includes a first or leading edge flow passage 34 disposed directly  
12 behind the airfoil leading edge 22.

13 [0026] The first passage is followed in turn by a second flow passage 36 separated therefrom  
14 by a first bridge 38 integrally joined to the pressure and suction sidewalls. The two passages  
15 34,36 extend the full radial span of the airfoil, with the second passage 36 continuing radially  
16 inwardly through the dovetail for providing an inlet in which a portion of the coolant 32 is  
17 received.

18 [0027] In the exemplary configuration illustrated in Figures 2 and 3, the cooling circuit 30  
19 further includes a dedicated trailing edge cooling passage having a separate inlet in the  
20 dovetail, and corresponding row of trailing edge outlet holes. A five-pass serpentine flow  
21 channel is disposed between the trailing edge passage and the second flow passage 36, with a  
22 third dedicated inlet in the dovetail. The first and second passages 34,36 cooperate to provide  
23 dedicated cooling of the leading edge, which complements the mid-chord and trailing edge  
24 cooling configurations of the circuit 30.

25 [0028] As shown in Figures 3 and 4, the bridge 38 includes a row of impingement apertures  
26 40 for discharging the coolant from the second passage 36 into the first passage 34 in  
27 impingement behind the leading edge 22. In this way, the coolant directly impinges the inside  
28 surface of the first channel 34 directly behind the leading edge for maximizing cooling thereof  
29 during operation.

30 [0029] The suction sidewall 20 includes a row of diffusion film cooling first holes 42

1 extending therethrough in flow communication with the first passage 34 for discharging a  
2 portion of the spent impingement air therefrom. The first holes 42 are disposed through the  
3 suction sidewall 20 at a compound inclination angle A,B as illustrated in Figure 4, with a  
4 quadrilateral cross section which forms a generally teardrop or diamond-shaped outlet 46 in  
5 the axially convex contour suction sidewall.

6 **[0030]** Each of the first holes 42 also includes a uniform, preferably cylindrical, inlet 44  
7 extending through the suction sidewall from the first passage 34. The inlet 44 is followed in  
8 turn by the teardrop outlet 46 which diverges therefrom for increasing flow area to effect  
9 diffusion of the spent impingement air being discharged therethrough. As shown in Figure 4,  
10 the cylindrical inlet 44 extends through a majority of the thickness of the pressure sidewall 20,  
11 with the diffusion outlet 46 being relatively short in comparison thereto.

12 **[0031]** The teardrop outlets 46 illustrated in Figure 4 include substantially straight sides or  
13 edges which are radially aligned along the airfoil span in the row of first holes 42. Each outlet  
14 46 also includes two inclined sides at the top and bottom thereof which extend from the radial  
15 straight side toward the leading edge 22. The two inclined sides are joined together by an  
16 arcuate fourth side of the outlet along the convex contour of the suction sidewall.

17 **[0032]** The airfoil further includes another row of diffusion film cooling second holes 48  
18 which extend through the suction sidewall 20 adjacent and parallel to the row of first holes 42.  
19 Like the first holes 42, the second holes 48 are disposed through the suction sidewall at a  
20 compound inclination angle A,B with a quadrilateral cross section forming a generally  
21 teardrop or diamond-shaped outlet 52 in the axially convex contour of the suction sidewall.

22 **[0033]** Each of the second holes 48, like the first holes 42, also includes a uniform and  
23 preferably cylindrical inlet 50 extending through a majority of the thickness of the suction  
24 sidewall 20 from the first passage 34. The inlet 50 is followed in turn by the teardrop outlet 52  
25 which diverges therefrom with an increasing flow area for effecting diffusion of the spent  
26 impingement air being discharged therethrough.

27 **[0034]** Like the outlet 46, the teardrop outlet 52 includes a substantially straight side or edge  
28 aligned radially along the airfoil span in the second row of holes 48. Two inclined top and  
29 bottom sides of the second holes 48 extend from the straight first side toward the first row of  
30 holes 42 and the leading edge 22. The two inclined sides are joined together by an arcuate

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1 fourth side along the convex contour of the airfoil.

2 [0035] As shown in Figure 4, the two rows of diffusion holes 42,48 are substantially  
3 identical to each other except in local configuration for complementing the chordally convex  
4 contour of the airfoil suction sidewall closely adjacent to the leading edge outside the first  
5 flow passage 34. The impingement air 32 is first discharged through the row of impingement  
6 holes 40 for effectively cooling the back side of the leading edge 22, and then is discharged  
7 through the two rows of diffusion holes 42,48. It is also noted that the first flow passage 34  
8 may include a conventional row of film cooling holes 54 closely adjacent to the leading edge  
9 22, as well as additional rows of film cooling holes if desired.

10 [0036] The preferred configuration of the diffusion holes 42,48 illustrated in Figure 4  
11 includes rectangular cross sections made by a corresponding electrical discharge machining  
12 (EDM) electrode 56. The electrode is sized with a suitably small rectangular distal end sized  
13 to generally match the circular cross section of the respective inlets 44,50 when joined.  
14 Typically, the inlets 44,50 may be initially drilled through the suction sidewall using any  
15 conventional process such as laser drilling, electrical discharge machining, or electrostream  
16 machining. The diffusion outlets may then be formed after the inlets. Or, the entire diffusion  
17 hole 42,48 may be formed in one operation.

18 [0037] The exemplary EDM electrode 56 increases in size from the small distal end thereof  
19 by diverging at about 10 degrees in the one vertical plane illustrated in Figure 4, and about 20  
20 degrees along the orthogonal horizontal plane illustrated. The 10 degree divergence in the  
21 vertical plane is from one side of the electrode, whereas the 20 degree divergence in the  
22 horizontal plane is symmetrical from both sides of the electrode, and split 10 degrees on each  
23 side. The proximal, or large end of the electrode also has a generally rectangular cross  
24 section.

25 [0038] The electrode may then be conventionally used for insertion from the suction side of  
26 the airfoil and aligned with the longitudinal centerline of the cylindrical inlets 42,48 to form  
27 the diffusion outlets thereof.

28 [0039] The formation of film cooling holes with diffusion outlets is conventional in general,  
29 but the configuration of the finally produced diffusion holes varies depending upon the  
30 curvature of the wall and the angular orientation of the electrode therethrough. The electrode

1 56 illustrated in Figure 4 produces the specifically configured rows of diffusion holes 42,48  
2 which enjoy improved cooperation along the suction side of the airfoil for improving the  
3 cooling effectiveness from the spent impingement air discharged therethrough.

4 [0040] More specifically, the row of second holes 48 is staggered with the row of first holes  
5 42 along the airfoil span, with the respective holes in each row being generally aligned  
6 radially between the holes in the adjacent row.

7 [0041] The first and second holes 42,48 of the two rows preferably overlap each other along  
8 the airfoil span, and chordally spaced apart, to provide a continuous line of film cooling air  
9 discharged therefrom along the airfoil suction sidewall 20 during operation. This  
10 configuration is evident in Figures 1 and 4 which ensures the formation of an improved film of  
11 cooling air from the combined configuration of the complementary diffusion hole rows.

12 [0042] As illustrated in Figure 4, the first and second holes 42,44 preferably have  
13 substantially equal outward inclination span angles B along the airfoil span which is  
14 preferably greater than about 45 degrees. With this inclination, the respective outlets 46,52 of  
15 the holes are closer to the airfoil tip than the corresponding inlets 44,50 which are disposed  
16 radially below the outlets. In other words, the diffusion holes 42,48 are inclined radially  
17 outwardly through the suction sidewall.

18 [0043] In view of the changing convex contour of the suction sidewall outboard of the first  
19 flow passage 34, the first and second holes 42,48 preferably have different aft inclination  
20 chord angles A along the suction sidewall, which are also preferably greater than about 45  
21 degrees. The respective outlets 46,52 are thusly closer to the airfoil trailing edge than their  
22 corresponding inlets 44,50 are.

23 [0044] Both sets of diffusion holes 42,48 are inclined through the suction sidewall into the  
24 first flow passage 34, with the first holes 42 being closer to the leading edge 22 than the  
25 second holes, and the second holes 48 being disposed closer to the bridge 38 than the first  
26 holes. In this way, the second holes 48 follow aft the first holes 42 in the direction  
27 downstream from the leading edge 22.

28 [0045] In the preferred embodiment illustrated in Figure 4, the first and second holes 42,48  
29 have inclination span angles B of about 48 or 49 degrees. The first holes 42 have inclined  
30 chord angles A of about 59 degrees. And, the second holes 48 have inclined chord angles A



1 of about 46 degrees.

2 [0046] The resulting compound inclination angles A,B of the two rows of diffusion holes  
3 42,48, along with the conical EDM electrode 56 create the unique teardrop or generally  
4 diamond-shaped outlet profiles along the axially convex suction sidewall. The teardrop  
5 outlets are staggered with each other between the two rows and provide continuity over the  
6 radial span of the airfoil which begins suitably below the mid-span or pitch section of the  
7 airfoil as illustrated in Figure 1 and terminates just below the airfoil tip.

8 [0047] The specific configuration of the blade illustrated in Figure 1 has been built and  
9 analyzed and enjoys substantial improvement in cooling in the region of the two rows of  
10 diffusion holes 42,48. In the preferred embodiment illustrated, the row of first holes 42  
11 consists of twelve holes, staggered with the row of second holes 48 consisting of thirteen  
12 holes.

13 [0048] In the preferred embodiment illustrated in the several Figures, including in particular  
14 Figure 4, the blade airfoil 12 preferably includes a thermal barrier coating 58 completely  
15 covering the external surfaces of the airfoil pressure and suction sidewalls 18,20, with the  
16 teardrop outlets 46,52 extending therethrough. The thermal barrier coating may have any  
17 conventional composition, and is typically a ceramic material providing enhanced thermal  
18 insulation for the exterior surface of the airfoil.

19 [0049] The thermal barrier coating is typically used with a suitable bond coat 60 which  
20 enhances bonding of the ceramic coating to the underlying metal substrate 62. The bond coat  
21 may have any conventional composition, such as platinum aluminide (PtAl) which  
22 additionally provides an environmental coating which enhances oxidation protection.

23 [0050] Advanced computational analysis of the performance of the two rows of diffusion  
24 holes 42,48 predicts a 50 percent increase in film cooling effectiveness just aft of the holes in  
25 the area of thermal distress experienced on the previous configuration of the airfoil having  
26 conventional round, non-diffusion film cooling holes. The increased film effectiveness of the  
27 diffusion holes illustrated in Figure 4 results in a substantial reduction in temperature of the  
28 airfoil just aft of the diffusion holes in the area of previous blade distress.

29 [0051] For example, the area of blade distress uncovered in the high-life previous blades  
30 was near the airfoil pitch section just aft of the leading edge on the suction sidewall. The two

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1 rows of specifically configured teardrop diffusion holes 42,48 complement each other and  
2 provide enhanced film cooling further complementing the thermal barrier coating 58. The  
3 improved cooling of the airfoil and the thermal barrier coating thereon further increases the  
4 useful life of the blade.

5 **[0052]** Another area of previous distress in the blade illustrated in Figure 1 was the tip  
6 region of the airfoil. As best illustrated in Figure 5, the airfoil tip 28 includes squealer ribs  
7 extending outwardly from the pressure and suction sidewalls 18,20 forming a recessed tip  
8 floor 64 therebetween. The resulting tip cavity ensures that the internal cooling circuit is  
9 contained and protected, with the squealer ribs of the tip 28 providing small extensions which  
10 cooperate with the surrounding turbine shroud to minimize the radial clearance or gap  
11 therewith.

12 **[0053]** The tip floor 64 illustrated in Figure 5 includes rows of floor holes 66 along both the  
13 pressure and suction sidewalls 18,20 inboard of the squealer ribs 28. Cooperating with the  
14 floor holes 66 is an axial row of tip holes 68 located below the squealer rib 28 along the  
15 pressure sidewall 18.

16 **[0054]** In operation, the floor holes 66 and tip holes 68 discharge the air coolant from the  
17 internal cooling circuit for preferentially cooling the airfoil tip. The air discharged from the  
18 pressure side tip holes 68 flows up and over the pressure side squealer rib and over the tip  
19 cavity, and in turn over the suction side squealer rib. And, the air discharged from the floor  
20 holes 66 provides enhanced cooling along both pressure and suction side squealer ribs.

21 **[0055]** In the preferred embodiment illustrated in Figure 5, the tip floor includes eight floor  
22 holes 66 suitably spread apart along the pressure sidewall 18; and seven floor holes 66 suitably  
23 spread apart along the suction sidewall 20. A common floor hole 66 is disposed midway  
24 between the opposite pressure and suction sidewalls at the aft end of the tip floor closest to the  
25 trailing edge.

26 **[0056]** Computational flow analysis predicts a substantial reduction in local tip temperatures  
27 of the airfoil tip due to the cooperation of the axial row of tip holes 68 and the distributed floor  
28 holes 66. This improvement in tip cooling performance is particularly remarkable and  
29 surprising since the axial row of tip holes 68 is a conventional feature previously found in a  
30 blade of this type commercially used in this country for many years. However that use

1 cooperated with floor holes in the airfoil tip being substantially fewer in number than those  
2 illustrated in Figure 5, and disposed primarily only along the airfoil pressure sidewall.

3 [0057] It is further noted that another conventional blade of the type illustrated in Figure 5  
4 was successfully used commercially in this country for many years, and had substantially the  
5 same sixteen-hole pattern illustrated in Figure 5, but without the use of the axial row of tip  
6 holes 68. The new combination of the axial tip holes 68 and the illustrated floor holes  
7 provides a substantial reduction in tip temperature not previously obtained.

8 [0058] As indicated above, the various forms of internal cooling circuits, pressure and  
9 suction side film cooling, and tip cooling are generally conventional, but found in myriad  
10 configurations in conventional practice. The exemplary blade illustrated in the several Figures  
11 in most part utilizes conventional cooling features in an identical manner previously used in  
12 successful commercial use for many years in this country, including the various rows of  
13 representative film cooling holes shown in the figures.

14 [0059] However, the two rows of diffusion holes 42,48 uniquely provide a significant  
15 improvement in local cooling of the airfoil suction side, while the specific configuration of the  
16 tip holes illustrated in Figure 5 enhances local cooling of the tip. The resulting rotor blade  
17 enjoys specifically tailored improvement in cooling in areas of thermal distress uncovered  
18 only after many, many years of accumulated service in actual operating engines. The  
19 improved blade is therefore available for retrofit in existing engines, as well as for use in new  
20 engines and will enjoy a commensurate increase in useful life thereof notwithstanding the  
21 harsh, high temperature operating environment in a modern gas turbine engine.

22 [0060] While there have been described herein what are considered to be preferred and  
23 exemplary embodiments of the present invention, other modifications of the invention shall be  
24 apparent to those skilled in the art from the teachings herein, and it is, therefore, desired to be  
25 secured in the appended claims all such modifications as fall within the true spirit and scope of  
26 the invention.

27 [0061] Accordingly, what is desired to be secured by Letters Patent of the United States is  
28 the invention as defined and differentiated in the following claims in which we claim: